

ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH, BLOOMSBURY

Wednesday 16th. December 1992

LOONDON CONCORD SINGERS

Tony McIntee - Piano

MALCOLM COTTLE - CONDUCTOR

Tonights programme consists of music for Christmas by 19th. and 20th. century composers, interspersed with seasonal motets by Byrd, Philips and Regnart from the 16/17th. centuries.

O Beatum et Sacrosanctum Diem

Peter Philips
(1561-1628)

O blessed and holy day, on which Our Lord deigned to be born for our sake of the Virgin Mary. Let the whole world therefore rejoice, and let us sing to Him in the sound of the trumpet, strings, harp and organ. Let us rejoice with the angels, ceaselessly singing his praise. Noel! Alleluia!

Philips was born in England, and sang as a choirboy in St. Paul's Cathedral, but later fled to the continent as a Catholic exile. He moved around between Italy and France, eventually taking holy orders and settling in the then Spanish Netherlands where he became organist of the Royal Chapel at Brussels.

Virga Jesse floruit

Anton Bruckner
(1824-1896)

The rod of Jesse has flowered: a virgin has brought forth God and man: God has restored peace, reconciling in Himself the lowest and the highest. Alleluia.

In spite of the fact that he was a church organist for much of his life, Bruckner wrote very little choral music for church use, most of his creative energy being used in writing his massive symphonies. There are, however, a few motets (along with the 3 great orchestral masses). Bruckner was a devout man and his religious fervour shows in every note.

Dies Sanctificatus
Hodie Christus natus est

William Byrd
(1542-1623)

A holy day has shone upon us; come, you nations, and adore the Lord; for this day a great light has descended upon the earth. Alleluia.

Today Christ is born; today a saviour has appeared; today on earth the angels sing and the archangels rejoice; today the just exult, saying: Glory to God in the highest. Alleluia

These two comparatively little known motets by Byrd are taken from the second book of Gradualia of 1607, as is also *Puer natus est nobis* which appears later in the programme.

A Hymn to the Virgin

Benjamin Britten
(1913-1976)

Written when he was only 16, this setting of a medieval poem is surely one of Britten's most beautiful works.

Puer natus est nobis

Jacobus Regnart
(1540-1599)

A boy is born to us, and to us a son is given, and his name shall be Jesus. Alleluia.

After eight days had passed, and the boy must be circumcised, he was called Jesus. Alleluia.

Regnart was born near Douai and was much travelled. He was a singer at the Imperial Chapel in Vienna for 10 years and then became Kappelmeister at the Imperial Court in Prague and assistant Kappelmeister to Archduke Ferdinand of Innsbruck. He wrote a large number of masses and motets as well as many collections of German part-songs.

Quatre Motets pour le temps de Noel

Francis Poulenc
(1899-1963)

1. O Magnum Mysterium - How great a mystery and how wonderful a sacrament, that beasts should see the the new-born Lord lying in a manger! Blessed Virgin to be allowed to carry the Christ-child.

2. Quem vidistis Pastores - Who have you seen, shepherds, tell us; announce to us who has appeared on earth? We have seen the birth, and choirs of angels praising God together. Say what you have seen and announce the Nativity of Christ.

3. Videntes Stellam - Seeing the star, the Magi rejoiced with a great joy; and entering the house they offered the Lord gold, frankincense and myrrh.

4. Hodie Christus natus est - see above

I N T E R V A L

Te Deum
Alleluia for Christmas

Andrew Toovey

Andrew Toovey is one of our younger composers, mostly associated with the avant-garde movement in this country. However these two charming settings are very much in the traditional mould.

Te Deum is a setting of a poem by Morag Morris - *For the bliss of Christmas - while Alleluia* has more familiar words - *A boy was born in Bethlehem - and was written for the wife of one of our choir members, Valerie Hill, and the choir of Bishop Ramsey School.*

Puer natus est nobis

William Byrd

A boy is born to us, and to us a son is given: and the government shall be on his shoulders: and he shall be called Angel of great counsel.

Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvellous things.

Glory be to the Father.....

Tryste Noel

Herbert Howells
(1892-1983)

When Oxford University Press were planning Book 3 of their highly successful *Carols for Choirs* series they invited several composers to contribute pieces especially for it. Most came up with something on a fairly small scale, but Howells, at the age of 76, produced this quite substantial piece to words by Louise Imogen Gurney.

Christmas Day

Gustav Holst
(1874-1934)

Holst wrote this in 1910 for the music students of Morley College. It is a choral fantasy on three carols - *Good Christian men rejoice, God rest you merry, gentlemen, and Come, ye lofty, come, ye lowly* - with occasional bursts of *The First Noel*.

A Maide so bright

Michael Ball

1. Sir Christemass, Good day
2. I sing of a maiden
3. The Corpus Christi carol
4. Adam lay y-bounden

Michael Ball is based in Manchester, where for some 20 years he taught music at Manchester Grammar School, before devoting himself entirely to composition.

A Maide so bright consists of settings of four well known 15/16th. century lyrics, the first and last being lively and somewhat tongue-in-cheek, whilst the two middle movements are quieter and more reflective.

The London Concord Singers are affiliated to the City Literary Institute.

We are delighted to announce that, yet again, we have received an award for choral enterprise from the Performing Rights Society.